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ABSTRACT

Many female administrators fear that white male culture will not allow them to be viewed as successful and powerful unless they behave as "ladies should." To explore such fears, this study examined the definition and application of power within the practice of women educational administrators. The purpose of the research was to construct a theory of power and to detail the differences between the feelings/beliefs and successes/failures of those women who define power as "power to" accomplish, and those who regard it in the more masculine conception of "power over" people and things. The research draws on the individual accounts of women administrators, offering their combined experiences of working in a masculine-constructed environment. It analyzes the socialization of women administrators and how women have been taught to believe that they must ask permission for all actions--a process, that leads to collaboration and consensus-building ("power to"). However, some women define power as "power over" and can become confrontational without even being aware of it, occupying areas customarily associated with men. It is concluded that neither conception is wholly desirable for women, and that each woman must be aware of such concerns during daily interactions. Contains 40 references. (RJM)

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1

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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October, 1994
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CONSTRUCTED COMMUNITIES OF WILLING AND UNWILLING COLLABORATIVE LEADERS: IN THE COMPANY OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

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There is a category of women--who were much more abrasive, but they lost their jobs. There are men who are abrasive, but they don't lose their jobs. There is a real gender difference. (woman administrator)

Fear is a "toxic transformer." It is a type of poison, a subversive poison, one which, if left unattended, will shape, corrode, and mold a person until she is unrecognizable, especially to herself. Having matured, we as female colleagues have gazed into the mirror of self-reflection in order to determine, with the help of each other, what we look like--at least from the perspective of two--and we have caught a glimpse of such fear. We were not expecting to encounter fear -- we simply sought to "check each other out" in an effort to determine if we are what we think we are--to determine if what we believe we have constructed ourselves to be in any way matches what we have been constructed to be by the dominant society, the patriarchal community, which gently molds us while we are in unguarded sleep and harshly bends and even breaks us while we are fearfully awake.

Yet, as we engage in our mutual contemplation of our practice, fear is our constant unwelcome companion. It is present because we as female educational administrators desire to be successful in our powerful positions. In fact, we want to be not merely successful, but extremely successful as measured by our dominant culture. We feel that we have the right, the skills, the talents, the intelligence, to be as successful as anyone, male or female, in our field.

Then what is it we fear? We fear that our dominant white male culture will not allow us to be viewed as successful and powerful unless we behave as "ladies should." This fear has shaped/constructed us in unknown ways. It has poisoned us, even as we self-reflect, by disabling our abilities to boldly analyze our practice as educational administrators. We claim to be powerful and successful, but we fear that others may not view us as such. We claim to be supported and respected by those around us, but we fear that we are not. These fears are not uncommon for people in positions of power, but we have found that for women, they are not only common, but strong enough to shape us into something we would not have been if we had been men. And ultimately, we fear that if we do not follow the normative rules of the dominant patriarchal culture we will not be viewed as successful

powerful leaders of education, but as misplaced shrews. Our research bears this out.

...within the category of female, there is a male-defined version of the "way to be female." Thus, women wishing to be correctly female must behave as men decide. Otherwise they become even less visible or valued.
(Brunner, 1993: 207).

Power: A Gendered Concept

Brunner (1993) has shown that the definition of power is gender specific. That is, that men in the male power network define power as domination, control, authority or "power over," and that women in the female power network define power as collaboration, consensus-building, or "power to." Brunner's study is based on the works of Stewart Clegg (1988) and Thomas E. Wartenberg (1990) who divide the literature on power along two trajectories which represent its dualistic nature. The subordinate trajectory defines power as the ability to do something or the "power to." The dominant trajectory defines power as control, command or dominion over others, or the "power over." Hannah Pitkin (1972: 276-277) agrees with this division when she states that the idea of power in "power to" is significantly different from the idea of power in "power over."

It is the "power over" definition of power which has dominated the discussion by political scientists and sociologists of power in communities (see Hunter, 1953; Domhoff, 1978; Dahl, 1968; Peterson, 1981; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; and Lukes, 1974). Theories grounded in the belief that power is defined as domination involve a specific type of relationship between human beings, one that is "hierarchical in virtue of one person's ability to affect the other without the other's being able to reciprocate" (Wartenberg, 190: 18). However, this traditional, dominant discourse by political scientists is slowly being replaced by current literature which asserts that power be conceptualized as "power to" (see Stone, 1989; Elkin, 1987; Clegg, 1989; and Wartenberg, 1990).

Brunner (1993) disclosed [using Floyd Hunter's (1953) reputational method] and studied male and female circuits [networks] of power (Clegg, 1989). The female circuit of power is different than the male circuit of power, with its own set of consistencies in what is said and done. These consistencies/practices are ones which women have been socialized to embrace. These practices include comfort with subordination, something unheard of in the male circuit of power. Further, as stated earlier, after studying the two [male and female] circuits of power, Brunner found that the male circuit of power defines and practices power as "power over," while the female circuit of power defines and practices power as "power to."

The development of a female circuit of power which defines power as "power to" follows the thinking of Nancy Hartsock (1987) when she calls for a theory of power for women--a theory which begins from the experience and

point of view of the dominated. "Such theories would give attention not only to the ways women are dominated, but also to their capacities, abilities, and strengths....[Said] theories would use these capacities as guides for a potential transformation of power relationships--that is for the empowerment of women" (158).

Such a theory of power for women not only gives attention to the capacities, abilities, and strengths of women, but also is important at the level of practice where women are still facing barriers to their being allowed a position of power. In fact, "...when women operate according to the female concept of power [power to], their chances to acquire positions of power increase dramatically" (Brunner, 1993: 191).

Power and Success

Although it has been established that men define power differently than women, it is problematic for anyone seeking a position of leadership that it is the male definition of power which continues to be the preferred definition. In fact, Cantor and Bernay (1992) assert that unconscious practices and social norms support the perception that power is masculine. Marshall (1985) continues by stating that "...men have been equated with power, while the power women were perceived to have was largely a reflection of the power of the man with or for whom they worked. Women did not have power on their own" (12).

If women do not have power on their own, how are they to be successful leaders? Is power necessary for success? According to Greenfield and Beam (1980: 54-55), "[p]ower, the ability to influence others, is a key to leadership effectiveness. Effective leadership is the ability to get things done in a way that satisfies both organizational goals and the personal needs of the workers." Rosabeth Kanter's 1977 study also demonstrated that power makes a critical difference and defines it as: "...the ability to get for the group, for subordinates or followers, a favorable share of resources, opportunities, and rewards possible through the organization" (168). Kanter continues with a discussion of the effectiveness of women leaders, stating that they are effective as long as they can respond to opportunities for power, and that "[b]oth men and women can exercise their authority more productively and with better response when they have power behind it. This, too, is a standard organizational cycle: power breeds effectiveness at getting results, which enhances power" (303).

It is at this juncture that the notion of a female definition of power becomes important. It has been established that women do not have power on their own (Marshall, 1985)--as defined by the dominant trajectory of power, "power over"--and, further, that power is necessary for success/effectiveness. In addition, it is known that women do indeed occupy positions of power and are considered successful/effective leaders. So, how is it that these women are powerful and successful? Brunner (1993) found that women in positions of power are viewed as successful when they have a

female definition/practice of power , "power to." That is, "...women who attain positions of power are most successful when they adopt female approaches to power which stress collaboration, inclusion, and consensus-building--models based on the belief that one person is not more powerful than another" (165).

A Leadership Dilemma: Caught in the Middle

It would appear, then, that one of the important contributing factors in the success of women educational leaders, is that they need to adhere to a female definition of power, "power to," and make certain to practice collaboration, inclusion, and consensus-building. However, it is disturbing to realize that while our society demands effective leaders--defined as "power over" figures--at the same time society insists that women, if they wish to be successful leaders [in the eyes of others], must define and practice power defined as "power to." It is no surprise that women are confused about their role as leaders. They have been socialized to believe that power is masculine, that is, domination, authority, control or "power over," while at the same time socialized to behave in a "power to" fashion in concert with others.

So, what about the women who define power as men define power? What about the women who define power as authority, domination? What about women who believe that they have the right to act out power the way men typically act out power? What are their chances of success? And, further, if they are placed in a position of power [leadership], what chance do they have of being viewed positively and accepted as credible, effective, or capable in that position?

Research Objectives

First, this study began with an effort to uncover an answer to the questions: What differences are there between the feelings/beliefs and successes/failures of those women who define power as "power to" and those women who define power as "power over." How do they differ in practice while in leadership roles? What is it that makes one woman a willing and spontaneous collaborator, while another woman is, because of societal norms, a more self-conscious and sometimes unwilling collaborator? Second, it was hypothesized that a woman who defines power as "power over" will struggle for affirmation/ success/ comfort in leadership roles, and that, in contrast, a woman who defines power as "power to" will thrive and be more satisfied in her position.

Method of Study: From Praxis to Theory

This study examines the definition and application of power within the practice of women educational administrators as a means to arrive at theory. This notion of practice before theory is characteristic of a human

science approach to the study of educational administration. Schleiermacher, quoted in Van Manen (1990), pointed out, "In and of itself theory does not control praxis, the theory of any science of education comes always later. Theory can only make room for itself once praxis has settled" (15). Smyth states that "The only task which 'educational theory' can legitimately pursue...is to develop theories of educational practice that are intrinsically related to practitioners' own accounts of what they are doing, that will improve the quality of their involvement in these practices and thereby allow them to practice better' (1992: 235).

We will not make generalizations about the experiences of the participants in the study as they are described and interpreted. As Van Manen (1990) asserts, generalizations cause problems, and quite probably prevent us from arriving at the desired understandings of the unique human experience (22). Further, we want to firmly establish that our reactions to and interpretations of the study are our own, that is, we understand that researcher values and position in culture, our own discursive practices, permeate the inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Fraser, 1989; Lather, 1991). The inquiry, then, becomes an interpretive act that occurs with the writing of texts, and as with any form of writing, certain constraints partially determine what is written (Van Maanen, 1988).

Thus, there are certain obvious constraints in the writing of this ethnography because, in addition to drawing on the experiences of other female administrators, we as researchers are also borrowing directly from our own experiences in the field. Further, our own experiences are shaped by the fact that we are white female educational administrators of middle-age.

These constrained lived experiences of the researchers and of the participants serve as data for the study. "Data are used differently;" as Lather (1991: 150) states, "rather than to support an analysis, they are used demonstrably, performatively." Eisner supports this particular use of data when he shares his belief that "it is more important to understand what people experience than to focus simply on what they do" (1988: x). This focus on the importance of experience in educational research is echoed in the works of Greene (1991), Connelly and Clandenin (1988), Miller (1992), Ayers (1992), and Schubert, (1992). Furthermore, although there is a current emphasis on the significance of teachers' experiences, very little work has been focused on administrators' experiences; particularly, according to Shakeshaft, there are few individual accounts, biographies, histories, case studies, or ethnographies centered on women (1987: 56). This study adds a relevant piece to existing knowledge in educational research by providing individual accounts of the lived experiences of women administrators.

A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach

As a work of human science, this study is not involved in "research for the sake of research", but rather in research as a way of investigating certain kinds of questions. This study actually starts with the questions themselves

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and the way the questions are understood, rather than with the method. It is evident, however, that the way we formulate the questions is related to the research method we use. It is with these thoughts in mind that we have decided that the hermeneutical phenomenological method is well suited for this study

Hermeneutics and phenomenology are human science approaches which are based in philosophy. In fact, they are philosophies and reflective disciplines, and thus, it is necessary that our writing reflect the epistemological or theoretical implication of doing phenomenology and hermeneutics. We have worked to combine this pedagogic human science research with practice--the study not only theorizes upon practice, it attempts to inform practice. Van Manen (1990) asserts:

> The purpose of human science research for educators is a critical pedagogical competence: knowing how to act tactfully in pedagogic situations on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness...hermeneutic phenomenological research...encourages a certain attentive awareness to the details and seemingly trivial dimensions of our everyday educational lives. It makes us thoughtfully aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted. Phenomenological descriptions, if done well, are compelling and insightful. The eloquence of the texts may contrast sharply with the toil, messiness, and difficulties involved in the research/ writing process (8).

Constructed Collaborators: Willing and Unwilling

The Socialization of Women Administrators

> *P. Well, that's what confuses us...that we are so strongly socialized and then we are placed in a position of power...*
> *C. ...and suddenly we're ripped off...we can't be it (powerful)...we're pulled apart. (Women administrators)*

Fryer (1984) indicates that the typical socialization process for administrators exists at both the formal and informal levels. At the formal level there is often a specific job description which enumerates the expected behaviors. There are also rules, regulations, policies, and administrative procedures which can guide the newcomer's behavior. At the informal level, prior socialization experienced through family relationships, schooling, and social interaction, in general, all shape the future administrator. Further socialization occurs once a woman becomes an administrator, and the "degree to which a newcomer will need further socialization depends on the amount of prior socialization to the professional role in question and the extent to which the new administrator's role and status in the...organization differs

from those of previously-held positions" (29). "Such socialization is particularly crucial to those who are not already participants in the dominant culture since being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier" (Duncan, 1993: 139).

It is socialization, then, that makes practice in a position of power easier since socialization enables a person to function in an acceptable/ normative fashion. It is this same socialization, however, which determines our definition of concepts such as power. And, the dominant white male culture's definition of power is control, authority, domination, or "power over." Women as a part of the same culture are taught/socialized to define power as "power over," and yet later, when placed in a position of power, they feel compelled to behave "as women should" and "act out" power defined in the subordinate fashion as "power to." The fact that their feminine definition and practice of power is tremendously important in order that they be viewed as successful/effective leaders (Brunner, 1993) is not necessarily something of which they are aware. Instead, it appears that they possess an attitude that one of their most important tasks is to remain faithful to their role as women and remain feminine, and therefore, subordinate. Listen to their voices:

> *I didn't seek this position. I didn't have that goal. I liked my job. I am assertive but not aggressive. It is inappropriate for women to be aggressive...men have to view each other as being serious competitors. I never looked at other women as competitors.*

> *As a woman, I don't want my style to be like a man. I am not a man. I don't think that I would feel comfortable acting like one. Yelling at a kid, playing poker with the guys--it's not my style.*

> *I also think that women in leadership roles [her voice gets l louder] must remember that they are women, and they got where they are because they are women. And, we shouldn't act like a man.*

Unfortunately, this loyalty to remaining feminine has its own cost. At first glance, it would appear that women in positions of power whom are viewed as successful/effective have it made. Not only have they been fortunate enough to experience success in positions of power, but also they are supported and viewed positively. It is ironic, then, that women who remain feminine in leadership positions question their own power, and, indeed, often find power distasteful. It is as if they recognize that to define power as "power to" and to practice collaboration and consensus-building is the way a subordinate, less powerful person should behave. They have been put in powerful positions only to acknowledge that they are powerless after all.

I don't see myself as a power person. I see myself as a popular person.

I don't think about power that much. I don't think about power over someone else or influencing anyone in my day to day life.

I think more of the responsibility of my position rather than the power of it..

Power doesn't reside within a person, but needs others.

It is difficult for me to say that I have power.

The perception that it is inappropriate for women to have power is widely held by women. Mary Cunningham (1985) in USA Today remarked "they [women] have been made to feel almost afraid of power. Women are still embarrassed to admit that they have power and to embrace its energy as something that can be very positive if implemented with a conscience" (9A). But, are these women, who deny their own power, viewed as successful by the dominant white male culture? Do men support those women in powerful leadership roles who define and practice "power to?" Do they even see women as operating differently than they do? Men in powerful positions talk about "power to" women leaders:

Women listen a lot better. They are more collaborative...Men are more accepted in a dominant authoritative style. When women do it [dominate] , they are viewed negatively.

Yes, there are differences [between men and women]. There are also differences in perceptions... I've read the research and the behaviors affirm the research. I see female administrators as far more process-oriented, more kid-oriented, more collaborative.

Men would tend to be more directive. I think that the former coaches who became administrators were accustomed to giving orders. The females are more collaborative. If I were a female wanting in, I would realize that people would be watching, and t he old school would say--who is she to tell me? So, she has to make joint decisions in order to convince others. As time goes by, I think more men will follow the collaborative style in order to be successful.

I think that most men view power as a way to intimidate and get things done. I think women are better organizers. They reach a compromise position better. They can get people to understand their point of view better.

Women do a much better job of coalition building and getting factual information across. Men use intimidation.

It is obvious that men recognize that women in leadership positions operate differently in roles that are similar to their own. Clearly, they are positive and supportive of the way the women operate. In fact, some of them believe that the success of women as collaborative leaders has the potential to change the leadership styles of men. It is interesting to note, however, that one man who claims to practice power the way that women do, as "power to", also admitted in a rather self-denigrating way that he doesn't feel powerful:

I am more like a woman--I hate to say this--no, I don't--but I am more like a woman in the way I handle power...Actually, I don't view myself as powerful.

Brunner (1993) reacts to this attitude by stating that although men "support the collaborative, consensus-building female concept of power, they view it as inconsistent with the "true" concept of power which they define as dominance. Men, therefore, view the female concept of power as powerlessness.

Although men may not feel powerful when they themselves practice "power to", men do support the leadership style of women who practice "power to." What, then, about women who practice power as dominance, control, authority just as men do? What do the men and women in powerful positions of leadership think of these women?

Men have more of a tendency to say 'do this, do this, and do this' because that is the way men have always been. They are very directive. Women can't be directive or before long they are called <u>bitches</u> [authors ' emphasis]. So if women want to stay in power they have to find a way to circumvent by using a softer style.

There is a category of women...who were much more abrasive, but they lost their jobs. there are men who are abrasive, but they don't lose their jobs. There is a real gender difference.

I think she [another woman] sees her position more like a man, and she frightens the men because of it...she is more ambitious...she hits the nail on the head...she has had trouble gathering votes because of that.

I think that we see aggression as normal behavior for men but abnormal for women. If we [women] are aggressive, we are out of control.

We all call her a "dumper". She doesn't have any concept of how much we all have to do and she pushes things off on us that she should be doing.

This type of response is not new to anyone who has read the literature (see Willett, 1971; French, 1885; Adler, Laney and Packer, 1993; Porat, 1991; Kanter, 1977; Slick and Gupton, 1993; Bartky, 1990; Tannen, 1990; Marshall, 1985; Shakeshaft, 1987b; Ferguson and Dunphy, 1991; Walker and Mehr, 1992) about women in positions of power. Further, the accusations hurled at women who behave in a "power over" manner include emotions of deep hostility. Consider the statement from Adler, Laney and Packer (1993: 17), "In the man's world of organizations, women face boundaries that have no rules, and are likely to change depending on the male norms being employed....Women who do not appear or act feminine enough may come to be seen as too masculine, a definition that may result in homophobia. And no matter how well they manage their sexuality and gender, women's sexuality is always available as a means of control by covert or overt behaviors, from humiliation to violence."

Therefore, women are "caught in the middle." They are socialized to be collaborators, to practice "power to--in fact, supported/affirmed if they do and attacked/criticized when they don't--and. at the same time, taught that the only "real" definition of power is control and domination or "power over." Thus, women are often confused by their ambivalent thoughts and reactions about issues of power. As Duncan (1993) writes upon being moved into a position of central office administration, which is generally thought to be more powerful than the building-administrator role which she had filled the preceding year, "...the difficulties I felt I was having were with being one of the group instead of the leader. And even with two years of the job behind me, I referred to my feelings that I would be happier as a superintendent than answering to someone else, and that I would prefer to be able to make decisions that stand without being counter-manded or second-guessed" (88).

We, as women, desire power just as men do. We have been taught to value what men value--so we do. Further, we have been taught to devalue what our dominant culture does not value, and, tragically, we discover--it is the female gender. We women are not as valuable as men! We take this devaluing deep into our subconscious, intellect, souls, and, finally, into daily practice. Most of us do not question the devaluing of self as female because we do not question our societal norms/beliefs/values. We, in fact, defend them. As mothers and teachers, we are the gatekeepers of our daughters'/sons'/friends' gendered behavior (see Debold, Wilson, and Malave, 1993).

"Power To" and "Power Over" Women Administrators: Degree of Difference

We have indicated that women leaders who practice collaboration, consensus-building or "power to" are, for the most part, supported and viewed as successful in their roles while women leaders who practice

domination, control or "power over" are not generally viewed positively. We have also indicated that the subordinate definition of power, "power to", is not felt to be the "real" definition of power, but rather a way that a subordinate may be powerful in a limited way. Collaboration, after all, is just another way to get permission from others to make decisions, etc.

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is to examine the differences between the feelings/beliefs and successes/failures of women who define power as "power to" and those women who define power as "power over." In addition, we will explore how they behave differently in their leadership roles.

• *A community of willing collaborative leaders* Women who willingly and perhaps unconsciously continue to define and use power in what has been referred to as the "feminine way," even when placed in positions of power usually reserved for men who define and use power as dominance and control, have similar voices when they talk about their use of power. Their voices reflect their feelings, beliefs, experiences of success and failure, and their own ways of "acting out" their own power while leading.

Respondent number one [white female]:

"I hope that I can provide enough knowledge or help the people find enough knowledge to make good decisions and set well-reasoned goals. I think I can support the reasonable goals that people come up with and help the people reach them...I have had the opportunity at their request to help them look at, for example, total quality management. I am an educator. That is the type of leadership I am talking about."

"Interestingly enough, [at the beginning of her career in educational administration] I was in a school district which didn't have a high school principal. The superintendent did it. He asked me if I would assume that principalship. I said, 'I don't want that job of principal, just let me go on doing what I am doing.' I knew that I would be his workhorse, but I was anyway, and I didn't want the flack that would come with the title. But, I was, in essence, the principal. People accepted me in that role. I was not seeking that position because I thought it would be more trouble than it was worth, and I was doing what I wanted to get done anyway. The only reason I would want any more authority would be to get things done."

"When I was first in administration, I found myself mainly in the 'quiet persistence' category. Then all of my colleagues were the 'good old boys' type males. The way to get an entry was to attend the meetings. They had their style, and they weren't used to me. They didn't know how to deal with me. So, I found that what was most useful was to sit and listen and quietly persist in getting my point across. Then persist on through the meetings. For example, I would say, 'We talked about doing so and so, and if we would...' and I would repeat what I wanted to say--persistently pursue what I thought was important. It is a case of choosing your wars carefully and staying out of battles. Over time that changed some. They began to allow me to be there. I could even initiate once in awhile."

"One of the most traumatic experiences of my life was when I had to sit and listen to them discuss whether they were going to allow me, a woman [principal of a large high school], go to the press box during football games. Women were never allowed to go to the press box. They couldn't decide whether I could go to that press box or not because after all, now I was the principal, and principals always went to the press box. But women never went to the press box. So, what should they do? I said 'Let me stop you right there. I don't care to go to the press box. I want to be down there with my students and my teachers. So, don't waste any more time on this....I went through many traumatic things that first year. I'd go to meetings, and all the men would say, 'Well, where are we going to go to lunch?' It took two years for me to be invited."

Respondent number two [black female]:

"I would say that power is the ability to affect someone's life. It is new to have to think about it. I don't feel power in my role....I build respect with whomever, by letting people know that they are important. What we are talking about here is interaction, building self-esteem, communication, sharing. The difference is caring. We must value their experiences--empower others. How they feel is important. The knowledge that they already have is good, and we need it."

"It is distressing, but others, usually men, operate in another way. I have tried to erase the subordinate role since I have been here. We were brought up in a setting where the father was dominant or other men. If we [women] don't have all the knowledge, we can't understand the whole picture. We are subordinated by finances and economics....People with money have power."

"Parents have a reaction to me. They say, 'I never had a principal [female] like you when I was a kid. They are also thinking, 'They are letting black people do it too?' I don't like to be a top-down leader. I don't feel comfortable with it. My grandfather said, 'You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.' He was a slave."

Respondent number three [white female]:

"I define power as the ability to get things done....I get things done with the help of others and the force of personality in a positive light. A pleasing personality does much more to persuade people to work. It is dualistic--the use of personality to get things done vs. just using people. You can only keep power if you use it productively because you can't get anything to happen unless you have people around you who will help it happen. I see power as positive only if you can get people to work with you for what you want."

"I operate differently than men in certain ways. It has always been accepted that men use their physical presence. Especially in discipline. Usually when someone is bigger--men are usually bigger--usually their physical presence is enough. My style is to take a kid aside. I don't yell. A man uses a loud voice. My voice is soft. So, I pull a kid aside. I don't want to alienate kids. I want to impact kids....Also, I adhere to amenities more than men. I write notes to say thanks. That's more of a female trait....They were

leery of me at first. The teachers want to have someone to bring their problems to and have a result....I listen and am responsive....I suppose women are good listeners because traditionally we are supposed to be the listener."

"Men have more a tendency to say, 'Do this, do this, and do this.' Because that is the way men have always been. They are very directive. Women can't be directive or before long you are called a bitch. So, women if they want to stay in power have found a way to circumvent that by using a softer style. As an example, I would use ----------[she names the female superintendent in her district], that once she's listened--she's a good listener. I don't think I have heard her raise her voice, or swear. I may have seen her say, 'Oh,' but she waits, and when she says something she says it quietly and firmly. And she waits until you are listening. She has a real understanding about time and space. She uses her size [she is very tiny/petite] to her advantage. She laughs and talks, but she is quieter about it. I can't imagine finding her in the bar at the Hilton laughing with the guys. But at a superintendents meeting that's where you will find many of the guys....In decision-making, I think men have a tendency to decide alone with a pre-set conclusion. I think women end up with more people involved, and are more willing to do things. Men say, 'We want to do this and this and this, and this is how we want it to end up.' Men have different styles, but they tend to fall back on, 'This is who I am, so do it.' That's how it's been done. When a woman does that, I am sure that when the natives talk, they attach expletives to her name."

Respondent number four [white female]:

"I think it is a real key issue whether the man in your life can support you in what you are doing. I am in a second marriage, and it is an extremely difficult role for a man to follow when the woman is in the predominately achieving, successful one. When you are sitting in the role of superintendent, you have to have a male companion who has a very strong ego and is very comfortable with himself."

"I think that a lot of the time that women are not interested in the next job. I didn't have my eye on being superintendent of schools.... I was selected [from within] because of who I am, and what I do. I'm very people centered. I am assertive but not aggressive. I listen and have a natural talent to work with people"

"I see power as something you don't get, but something someone gives to you. You don't take it. Because of the way I work with people , and the fact that I respect people, I have a great deal of respect, so I have very little trouble getting people to work successfully in their roles. I don't try to control people. So, I empower people....I believe that I need to do the very best I can do right where I am, and the good Lord will let me know if I'm supposed to be somewhere else."

• *A community of unwilling collaborative leaders*

> "To finally recognize our own invisibility is to finally be on the path toward visibility."
>
> --Mitsuye Yamada

There are women who recognize their own invisibility, not as the result of conscious intellectual research but as the stark result of a light being turned on in a dark room. The light and the room vary from woman to woman. For some the light comes on slowly, while for others it come on so abruptly that they are left blinded for a period of time until they get used to the light. For some, the room is large and familiar--even though dark--while for others the room is cramped, hostile, and uncomfortable. The result of being introduced to a lighted environment, however, remains somewhat consistent from woman to woman.

It is odd, but we presume so much. We, as women tend to believe that we are visible, even when everything in our environment tells us that we are not. I guess we believe ourselves visible because we have not experienced "real" visibility. Then, suddenly, one day we notice a difference between the way we are listened to and the way a male colleague is listened to, or we hear a remark like, "Do you think a <u>woman</u> could do that job?," when we've been doing it for years. Why didn't someone notice that we <u>were</u> doing it? For God's sake, can't they see?! That's one way the light comes on.

There are other ways. A more en-lightened friend makes a remark or loans us a book with an intriguing title. We are suddenly on the path to en-lightenment. We fight with the idea. We have never experienced gender bias...or, have we? We reflect, we talk, we read, we search, we re-search--WE GET ANGRY. We ask questions. Why can't we, why don't we, why aren't we? Why are we denied so much when we are so capable, intelligent, personable, loving, gentle, strong, and ready. Why don't they want us to <u>do</u>? to help? to work in a position that matches our strengths? They <u>need</u> us, can't they <u>see</u> that? No, no, no. They can't see. Sadness. They are hurt, too. They have no eyes. What is life without eyes? We remember--it is life in a room without the light on--our room, our recently well-lighted room. They are still living in darkness. More sadness. Why does our culture insist on our blindness? Why are we raised, taught, socialized to give up our eyesight?

> Once we are old enough to have had an education, the first step toward self-esteem for most of us is not to learn but to *un*learn. We need to demystify the forces that have told us what we *should be* before we can value what we *are*.
>
> That's difficult enough when we have been misvalued by an upbringing or social bias that is clearly wrong. But what happens when this wrongness is taught as objective truth? When the most respected sources of information make some groups invisible and others

invincible? When we are encouraged to choose between "bettering" ourselves and becoming ourselves (Steinem, 1992: p. 109)?

Women who want to define and practice power as "power over," believe at some level that they have the same right to the dominant definition and practice of power as the men in our culture. They sound different when they talk about their practice and lives as leaders, and they expect to be visible in the "real" sense of the word.

Respondent number one [white female]:

" Such a flattening of the organization and the accompanying emphasis [reflecting on an organizational restructuring which impacted her central office position] on decentralization was in accord with my 'espoused theory' of organizational effectiveness, but perhaps my 'theory of action, ' my use of power, was incongruent with my espoused theory, my definition of power....The perceived loss of power affected me as I experienced an inability to move things through the bureaucratic structure. Proposals met with questions which seemed interrogational in nature and with strong reservations as to the desirability of the proposals. Decisions were questioned or countermanded. Suggestions were opposed. People seemed to be against my suggestions and ideas, and I know it's just because they misunderstood them."

"Because I sensed a need for some kind of codification in the area of curriculum, I presented a plan for curriculum development and management to the other cabinet members early in January. I had devoted most of the December holiday break and my vacation to the writing of the plan and was excited and committed to it. However, although the model was accepted by the superintendent, it met strong resistance from three of the cabinet members and from elementary principals. From my point of view, objections were not based on compelling arguments and I had difficulty obtaining definitive reasons for objections."

"....The underlying questions for me are still: Why was I questioned in this way? Why hadn't all of this come out before? When did I begin to be held responsible for the district plan and why? Why did I feel so defensive in this instance and in several other discussions of curriculum? Why was I unable to strongly and consistently defend my points of view and my behaviors so that others would understand and perhaps accept them? Why couldn't I reach acceptable agreement with the other two persons on what should be done?"

"...[when reflecting on an interaction with a male administrator] This particular set of occurrences indicates that how others view me is indeed important and that, with this man, perhaps my language and behavior had not been tentative enough. My perception is I had perhaps been too dominant and too threatening for him to cope with and he finally had to express it. Since he was one of the elementary principals that had been 'giving me trouble' in meetings all year, I could at least see now what the source of some of the 'trouble' was."

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Respondent number two [white female]:

"I am an idea person, and that has always gotten me into trouble. I think the problem is that ideas come to you when you are alone--when you go inside and think. And, unfortunately, when you come up with an idea that you want to try, and you are in a position of power, you leave all your collaborative tendencies behind. Yes, I believe in collaboration and consensus-building, but I have to admit, I don't always practice it. I especially forget when I have what I feel is a great idea. I want to talk people into trying it, so I sell it--or at least I try."

"This happened when I restructured the math curriculum in my building. I know quite a bit about math even though it is not my degree area. It just happens to be one of my greatest strengths. I feel that the way we teach math is robbing the students of their true ability in math. It is a workbook curriculum as it stands now. So, I moved to drop a year--a textbook year--of math out of the curriculum--because math books are two-thirds review and one-third new material. You would have thought the end of the world was at hand. But, what I am focusing on here is the <u>way</u> I did it. I just went to the teachers and asked them to start trying some stuff. I did it in a way that was logical to me. I did not practice collaboration. They did what I asked, in part, because they agreed with me, but also because I was their boss. Some of them, in fact, were angry with my ideas and the way I shared them."

"Of course, this type of curriculum change is far-reaching. As a result, I have a lot of enemies in the district, especially at the high school which was impacted by the changes without their input. They hate my guts. It seems that most people either hate me or love me. And, it takes people a long time to love me--they have to really know me. I am not sure what that's about."

Respondent number three [white female]:

"We even have three women on the commission now, and the men are having a hard time with that. We've even had shouting matches. I've heard my father's voice in those meetings. There are a couple of men who have a real hard time dealing with the fact that we know what we are doing. And, even if we don't, we want to find out what we are doing. We don't want to take a vote until we know what we need to know. If we need more information, we make certain that we get it. We are much more detail oriented than the men in my opinion....There was one decision we were supposed to make, and we just refused to vote on it until we got our maps....I've been on the commission for several months now, and a couple of weeks ago was the first time I had seen a zoning map....we [the women] have made certain that if a decision was to be made that we have a public hearing. Now we have our ordinances and maps, finally. We have not had the resources that we needed to make a decision. There it is again. If you don't have your resources, you have to sit back and do nothing. That is not a power position to be in."

"Before the I was on the commission, I've heard, it was a good old boys system, and if something didn't suit their fancy, it didn't happen. I don't know how to explain it, that is just what I've heard. Now there is still some

of that. There are still some people connected to the old boys system on the commission....It is interesting that sometimes minds get changed very quickly. I have a hard time dealing with that. When I make a decision, I make a decision. I've had people yelling at me on the streets. So, you have to take the heat if you are in a power position."

Reactions to the Study

"In a dark time, the eye begins to see,..."
--Roethke
"To change, we must focus not only on what we see, but how we talk."
--Albert Einstein

We have chosen to share reactions to this study rather than draw conclusions in an effort to draw attention to the fact that the reactions are <u>our</u> reactions. Any understandings we share in this section are <u>our</u> interpretations/perceptions of what we have experienced and heard when talking to women in positions of leadership. We have attempted to give the reader a "feel" for how women in power positions define, use power, and are viewed as they do both. Our efforts, however, are very limited by space, time, and our own decisions of what should be shared. What we have chosen to share and our interpretations of what we have learned/heard/seen are our perceptions/opinions of a particular reality as we define/describe it. The particular reality that we describe is not necessarily connected to the thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of participants in the study. Finally, the last interpretation belongs to the reader. "...[W]e do not suppose that the validity of one interpretation of a text...necessarily precludes the validity of another. We recognize the interpretive character of our own understanding of a work.... But this means that we also acknowledge this partiality and concede that the work may admit of interpretations other than our own.... The idea is...that a given work admits of diverse interpretations..." (Warnke, 1993: 91).

<u>Reaction Number One:</u>

Women who practice "power over" have collaborative skills and use them. They use them differently than "power to" women, however.

Just because a woman practices "power over" does not mean that she is not also collaborative in practice. In fact, it appears that consensus-building strategies are imperative for any woman in a position of power. It is the way the "power over" woman uses collaboration that is different--especially the point at which other people become part of the process. Women who practice "power to" include others at the very beginning stages. Some even go so far as to include others in defining the problem. They enter meetings and ask the question, "What <u>is</u> our problem?" They report that usually the problem is not what they thought it was.

In contrast, "power over" women spend time before group meetings designing solutions, plans, actions, which they then share with the group. It

is not that they always enter a meetings with their own plans, but that they expect that as leaders they are supposed to have action plans ready.

Reaction Number Two:

Women who practice "power over" many times define power as "power to."

It is not when you ask "power over" women to define power that you discover the differences between them and "power to" women. It is when you ask them about their practice or their reflections on their practice that the differences become clearer. There are other women, however, that not only practice "power over" but also define power as dominance, control, and authority over others. This last category of women is the group that is least supported. In fact, when people [others] around these women were asked if these women were successful and powerful, they responded that they didn't want to call them powerful. They just couldn't give them any positive credit at all. They stated that everyone wanted them [the women in power positions] fired or didn't want them promoted.

Reaction Number Three:

Women who practice "power over" report more discomfort, conflict while in their positions of power.

"Power over" women report obstructive and at times almost violent reactions from some others toward them. This is not to say that "power to" women in positions of power never have adverse reactions to their actions in the role, but generally what they report appears to be related to the action [one that anyone in the role would expect when taking unpopular action]. "Power over" women, on the other hand, expressed surprise and bewilderment over the strong negative reactions to their ideas and plans. There appeared to be no rational explanation for such response.

Reaction Number Four:

"Power over" women many times are idea people who have a willingness to take risks.

Again, this reaction is to a degree of difference. Women who practice "power over" often talk about their ideas and how they are or are not received. This was not the case with "power to" women Cryss interviewed.

Reaction Number Five:

"Power over" women don't talk about the need to remain feminine in their positions. This does not mean, however, that they don't look feminine.

Almost every woman in the study who is a "power to" woman, referred to the fact that they are women and need to remain women--that they shouldn't act like men. "Power over" women, on the other hand, made no reference to needing to act like men or women. They did, however, make it clear that when a position of power they felt they had the right/obligation to be decision-makers just as men in the same position would be.

Reaction Number Six:

"Power over" women more often talk about confronting conflict, while "power to" women more often talk about working around it.

In story after story, women who practice "power to" shared how they managed their own powerlessness [see text]. Women who practice "power over" tell stories of direct confrontation more often

Praxis to Theory: Re-visitation of Constructed Collaborators

In the final re-visitation of the text, we propose that women who define/practice "power to" have held fast to the idea of their own powerlessness. All women have been socialized to believe that they must ask permission for any action they take. Acts of collaboration/consensus-building do just that. Whether a woman continues to construct herself as a willing collaborator--a willing subordinate-- when allowed a position with inherent power, varies from woman to woman. We do believe that instinctively most women are aware at some level that if they are to be accepted and supported, and, yes, even labeled as successful, they must adhere to societal norms and expectations.

As long as women hold the "power to" definition of power, they will continue to ask permission of others to act and think in their positions of power. In a sense, they will continue to subordinate themselves to the dominant definition and practice of power: the male definition or "power over." In contrast, women who define power and/or practice it as "power over", can become confrontational without even being aware of it. They thus invade the turf only allowed men. They often have difficulty being viewed as successful/effective because they have failed their first duty, which is to observe cultural norms and behave as "ladies should."

Many questions come to our minds as we view our proposal: Which practice is better for women--"power to" or "power over?" Which practice is easier? What should women choose to do? At what cost? Will things change?

There are no answers to these questions. Obviously, each woman must decide for herself. It is not easy for a woman to be in a position of power no matter what her practice/definition of power. It is, however, important to continue the pursuit of understanding these mainly hidden difficulties. "Feminists working in the educational establishments, whatever their degree of radicalism, have to work within the mainstream and often have to modify their feminisms to liberalism and reformism. They aim for what is possible whilst maintaining a vision of the ideal "(Adler, Laney, and Packer, 1993: xi).

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